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ABSTRACT

An insider/outsider approach to Appalachian culture examines cultural differences of Appalachian people that necessitate cross-cultural educational studies usually reserved for ethnic and racial minority groups. An overview focuses on current economic conditions affecting the region's culture and some stereotypes of Appalachians that remain current. A major myth is that the land is poor, entrapping its inhabitants in poverty. Actually the land is quite rich in natural resources. However misuse of the land has created poverty for many and fortunes for a few, while the inhabitants' ignorance of their own history permits the continuance of this state of affairs. Blaming the victim has been the standard approach that educators have taken to this problem: defining cultural differences as innate handicaps to learning. Harry Caudill described such differences in "A Darkness at Dawn": attachment to the land, attachment to a small community of families, childish trust in other people, ignorance of the nature of the land (leading to its misuse), mistrust of government, and disregard of education. The assertion is also made that Appalachian culture is right-brained, i.e., intuitive, sensual, spiritual, creative, and emotional; and is expressed through metaphor, simile, and poetry. These attributes are not valued in many schools, and lack of understanding contributes to the dropout rate. Higher priority must be given to the arts, instruction incorporating regional dialects, and exposure to the diversities of other cultures. Contains 37 references. (JAT)

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MAKING A CASE FOR A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LITERACY IN APPALACHIA

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This paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Organization of Human Service Educators, held in Knoxville, Tennessee, March 1994.

Abstract

Traditionally education has not worked very well in Appalachia. In past decades, the low educational level was often blamed on personal poverty, poor transportation, or inaccessible schools. Today those cannot explain areas having high a illiteracy rate and a majority of their adults (54%) lacking a high school diploma or GED.

In the 1950s, educationists devised the term "cultural deprivation" to explain why children from sub-cultures, like Native Americans, African-Americans, and white Anglo-Saxons in the Appalachian and Ozark mountains, were not doing well in school. This approach placed the blame on the home culture of the poorly educated children rather than the educational system.

Today it is encouraging that there is an increasing recognition of American cultural diversity and an increasing interest in using cross-cultural approaches to educate children from minority or ethnic groups. However, Appalachians have benefited very little from this trend since they are a "hidden" minority. Although appearing similar to mainstream Americans, in fact their value orientations and behavior patterns are often in opposition with those of mainstream America and incompatible with the culture in its educational system.

This paper discusses aspects of Appalachian Culture and recommends a cross-cultural approach to improving literacy and education in this region.

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MAKING A CASE FOR A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LITERACY IN APPALACHIA

Preface

It seems like I have composed this paper much as one creates a patchwork quilt. Of course, a quilt is made by sewing together small bits of fabric into "blocks." Then the blocks are sewn together into larger units, eventually creating a large complete whole. In much the same way, I have been gathering small bits of information from various sources about concepts related to this topic and gradually piecing those together into larger units. Right now my piecing-together process is not yet complete, and my argument is just in its beginning stages. So in this presentation, I feel as if I were showing you some of the individual blocks, to give you an idea of what the large finished design will be like.

Preface	Appalachian Context	Education in Appalachia
A New Paradigm	Cultural Diversity	Appalachian Culture and Dialect
Multicultural Education	Literacy in Appalachia	Cross-Cultural, Bilingual Approaches

In one sense I am not an Appalachian, since I was born in another region of the country and have lived many other places. But when being Appalachian is defined as

someone whose parents or grandparents were Appalachians, I do fit the definition. Some of my mother's ancestors settled in the Tennessee hills not long after the Revolutionary War. When I was little, my grandparents lived on the farm that belonged to my great-grandfather. That was where my parents always took us to spend holidays and summer vacations. And it became my home-away-from-home and my favorite place in the world. My grandparents worked hard, selling eggs and some crops, canning vegetables, caring for their livestock, and so forth. They had no electricity until the 1940s, no running water until the 1950s, and no indoor bathroom until the 1960s. Aunts and uncles and cousins lived nearby, and the neighborhood worked together and played together. Nobody had much money, but there was a lot of joy.

My grandparents' farm is where I live now. I moved back there partly because my parents lived there and partly because I have a strong attachment to the place. I love the landscape – the shady wooded cove, the gurgling spring, and the glorious view of distant mountains from the top of our ridge. I like the root cellar my grandfather dug under their smokehouse, and the rocks he hauled out of the fields and piled at the fence rows, and the little house he started as a new one-room chicken house and added on to room by room. (Of course, I also like having electricity and indoor plumbing, and being able to drive from the farm into into the city in a short while.) So when I think of Appalachia, I am both insider and outsider. I am both "from here" and "not from here" at the same time.

But our Appalachian neighborhood has changed greatly in forty years. My grandparents long since passed away – so did the aunts and uncles. The cousins moved away to get closer to jobs and good schools. For a long time, about the only profitable crop one could grow had been tobacco. Now it is grown less and less, probably more because people lost patience with being paid such a little per hour than because of the publicity of health problems eventually caused by tobacco, and the once imposing tobacco barns in

the neighborhood fall in disrepair. In fact, few crops are grown at all, except for a little hay. Many of the rich fields became brier patches, then seedling thickets, and then woods.

Neighbors who work at jobs now generally drive from 10 to 30 miles to get to their jobs. It is possible that one of the main vocations in the neighborhood may be drawing some kind of government assistance – welfare, disability, food stamps – becoming the crutch of a third generation. County government services are pretty much non-existent in our neighborhood – you're on your own when snow-laden trees fall on the county road or spring rains wash it away.

But the aspect that distresses me most is that in my neighborhood graduating from high school is the exception rather than the rule. That was true in my grandfather's days when he couldn't go because the only high school in the county was a boarding school and he was acting as the head of the family after his father died. It was still true during the Depression when my mother couldn't finish her last year of high school because there was no money to buy shoes and she took a job in a mill to help support the family. At that time, transportation to schools was still rather difficult too.

But the high drop-out and low literacy rate was still true for my generation and is also still true for the current younger generation. According to the 1990 census, only about 46% of adults over 25 years old in our county have finished a high school diploma or a GED – in Tennessee, the state average of adults' having finished high school work is about 58%. Of the 54% in our county who didn't finish, 34% have less than a 9th grade education – another 21% entered high school but dropped out before graduation (Tennessee Literacy Coalition).

And nowadays the low educational level can not be blamed on the Depression, or poor transportation, or lack of assessable schools, or no money for shoes, etc. As a firm believer in the potential of education, I think this is a real problem. I want to know why this problem still exists and what can be done about it. We are all in this together and all parts

effect the whole. So, as a permanent resident of an Appalachian neighborhood, I want some answers and some solutions. And I have come to believe that part of the problem lies in the structure of the educational system and part of the solution lies in using a cross-cultural approach to education and literacy in this region.

Appalachian Context

Whether one takes a positive or negative view of the physical setting, few people would deny the strong influence it has had on Appalachian history and the life of the Appalachians. Jim Wayne Miller wrote that he had no interest in mountains as mere landscape. As a poet he is interested in " people in their place: how they have coped, what they have come to be as a result of living in that place. " (Miller, 1988, p. 85) Miller commented that the Appalachian region has had a "triple history": 1. a history shared with the rest of America; 2. a history shared with the rest of the South; 3. and a relatively unknown history that is all its own.

After the Civil War, two different groups of flatlanders became interested in Appalachia. One group was the protestant missionaries looking for new converts. Another group was the local color writers who found that superficial travel sketches about Appalachia were popular with editors. "The two groups gave Appalachia a high profile and by transmuting the atypical into the norm, stereotyped the region." (Sprague, p. 22) And to a large extent, those stereotypes persist until the present day in the characters of Snuffy Smith, the Beverly Hillbillys, the Dukes of Hazard, etc.

One problem I found in searching the literature about Appalachia is that much of it is very old. Many of the really good studies were conducted decades ago, and since their publication there have been culture-shaking changes in transportation, communications, education, and the economy of Appalachia. Now there is a new generation of Appalachians that is quite different in outlook from the parents and grandparents that the

published studies describe (Cox, p. 250). But in many cases, there is really nothing available better than the studies done decades ago.

The Swiss vs. the Appalachians

Although Harry Caudill's 1976 book called A Darkness at Dawn, has been bitterly criticized by some other Appalachian authors, I was intrigued by Caudill's startling comparison between the European country of Switzerland and Eastern Kentucky, Caudill's home region. Both Switzerland and eastern Kentucky are mountainous and approximately the same size – about 15,000 square miles each. Both are located on heavily industrialized continents where people are highly competitive. But these are about the only similarities between the two lands.

Switzerland has very poor soil, with about 21 % of it permanently covered with ice and snow. The slopes are very steep, and the forests are sparse and limited. Brine beds used by the chemical industry are about the only mineral resource. The country is landlocked and has to transport all goods by road or rails. Because of its location, Switzerland has had to maintain a strong military force. In school, citizens have to study Italian, French, and German, while many rural people also speak another ancient language.

By contrast, eastern Kentucky has thick forests and rich deposits of coal. In spite of the scars of coal mining, there is still much natural beauty in the landscape. The area has a mild climate and plenty of water. The soil is rich and tillable in the bottomlands.

But there is even more contrast between the "fruits" of the two lands. The Swiss are insurance brokers and bankers on a worldwide scale, with their currency known for its stability. Their prosperity almost total, with an annual national unemployment rate of about 50 people. There are 22 institutions of higher learning, including 5 top-quality medical schools. Their schools are effective with less than 1% of all adults being illiterate. But children are only in school from 8 am until 12:30 pm and are then sent home to study or to

work with their parents. The Swiss armed forces are effective and efficient. Their democratic government is known for its honesty, with officials who are honest, diligent, and frugal. Switzerland has to enforce strict immigration laws because so many want to move in.

By contrast, people in Kentucky have been cursed by the riches of their land. Outsiders (or "furriners") bought up land or mineral rights for nearly nothing. Then the people elected officials who sided with the industrial robbers against the mountaineers. The ones who prospered were the outsiders who had learned to "understand the purposes and functions of government and bend it to their purposes." (Caudill, p. 48) In the 1970s one-fifth of the adults in eastern Kentucky were illiterate, with one-third of them on relief. There has always been a constant outflow of people moving away. Caudill adds:

> The Swiss mountaineers took a depressingly poor land and, by good judgment and hard work, became rich, powerful, and respected. Kentucky mountaineers took a rich land and became poor. . .
>
> How might the tragedies of the Appalachians have been avoided? Or, more aptly, how may the present mess be converted into a genuine North American Switzerland? The answer lies in a change of attitude toward government and a willingness to use this prime tool for huge and constructive tasks. As long as Kentucky mountaineers mistrust government, keep it weak, and elect jovial nonentities to govern them, they have no hope for significant social, moral, or political improvement. In Kentucky politics it has become a case of the bland leading the bland, with predictably bland results. (Caudill, p. 47)

Education in the Context of Appalachia

Traditionally, education has not worked very well in Appalachia. According to R. G. Eller (1989), "With high drop-out and illiteracy rates, the educational failure of students in the region is typical of that of other subpopulations in the nation." Although many social commentators have written extensively about the weaknesses of education in Appalachia, ethnographic research on education in Appalachia is almost non-existent. A few community studies have included some observations about education but generally these have been only limited parts of the studies. "The observations that have been made in

these studies suggest that schools in Appalachia do have many of the same problems that face other schools serving more familiar ethnic groups." (Reck et al, 1987, pg. 15)

In A Darkness at Dawn, Harry Caudill charged that in spite of the good done by the schools and colleges in the region, in one sense, the Appalachian institutions of education have had calamitous effect:

> They have educated their students for the outside world rather than for the building of prosperity and well-being at home. They have, as a rule, given a glimpse of distant urbia, and the graduates have taken their diplomas to areas already surfeited with the well trained while their homeland suffers from a chronic lack of educated brains. Schools at all levels have been guilty of a colossal failure in that they do not teach and have never taught fundamental truths about the Appalachian land: how misuse of the land has led to social and economic decline for most of the inhabitants, how exploitation of the land has built great fortunes for a few, how wise use of the land might make the word "Appalachia" a synonym for progress instead of blight. The hill people probably know as little about their native heath as any folk on earth, and for the dire consequences the schools must shoulder a major share of the responsibility. (Caudill, p. 38)

Further, Caudill charged that the reason Appalachian teachers had not taught their students about the geology, natural resources, and the wonders of the native woodlands was because they knew so little about these things themselves – an indictment of Teacher Education in the region. During the 1960s "War on Poverty,"

> . . . Colleges and universities that serve the region unwittingly did their share to perpetuate the economic distress. None hired a professor to teach a course on the economics of the Appalachian region. All continued to spread the worn myth that Appalachian people are poor because their land is poor and, by implication at least, that the wisest course is to leave. Thus indifference on campuses combined with greed in boardrooms to work the ruin of one of the fairest and most promising parts of the globe. (Caudill, p. 43)

According to Holland, "Children in Appalachia have unique problems because teachers and principals held strong attitudes against their culture, especially concerning the children's attitude toward education, their high degree of mobility, persistent absenteeism, high drop-out rate, and cultural language problems." (Holland, pg. 97) Thus, we see an example of "blaming the victims" for their own problems.

A New Paradigm – From Blaming the Victim to System Change

When William Ryan introduced the concept of "Blaming the Victim," he pointed out that the process of Blaming the Victim has been applied to almost every American social problem, from public health to anti-poverty programs to social welfare. The process happens so smoothly that it seems downright rational – a logical plan of action that appears genuinely altruistic and humanitarian. Ryan outlined four steps in the formula for Blaming the Victim:

1. Identify a social problem. This isn't hard since social problems are there in great abundance.
2. Study people affected by the problem and find out how they differ from "typical" people in the population who don't have the problem.
3. Define the differences in the people as the cause of the social problem itself.
4. Assign a government bureaucrat to invent a program to correct the differences in the people (Ryan, 1976).

Thus, many programs that have been developed which were supposed to "solve" social problems in America were based on the assumption that individuals "have" social problems because of some kind of unusual circumstances; some accident, illness, personal defect or handicap has kept the individuals from using the usual mechanisms for success. The effort was aimed at changing the people to fit within the system. And the process of victim blaming has principally worked to block any real social change.

And the victims in this society are not just those who are officially below the poverty level or those who are non-white. At least two-thirds or three/fourths of all American could be potential victims. Anyone who depends on salary and wages and does not have a separate source of income through some substantial wealth is potentially a victim in America, since all of us are somewhat vulnerable to inflation, unemployment, unfair taxes, environmental pollution, catastrophic illnesses, traffic accidents, and the greed of large corporations (Ryan).

For decades, Blaming the Victim has been the dominant style in American social welfare. At the same time, there has been a completing style of action which springs from a different paradigm. Change agents with this view searched for defects in the community or the environment rather than in the individual people. Instead of trying to change people to fit the system, they changed the system to accommodate more kinds of people. The difference between the two paradigms can be illustrated by varying approaches to health problems. For example, victim blamers might deal with smallpox by providing remedial treatment to the afflicted people through an arrangement with a local doctor. The opposite approach was followed by public health agents who "changed the system" by providing preventive smallpox inoculation to the total population (Ryan).

Blaming the Victim has been practiced also in our educational system. The problem was obvious: thousands of children were dropping out of school and thousands of graduates were still illiterate. But the victims – the mis-educated children – were blamed for their own mis-education. The victim blamers thought that these children contained within themselves the causes of their failure to become literate. In the 1950s, educationists devised the term "cultural deprivation," which implied that lower class children did not bring with them enough intellectual baggage as they entered school. Such "culturally deprived" children had no books or newspapers in the home. If they talked at all, they did not talk correctly – using some non-standard dialect of English. The expectations of their teachers were low because the students came from culturally deprived backgrounds (Ryan, 1976).

Thus, cultural deprivation became a catch-all excuse for the failure of so many schools. It was interesting that one of the few places where I found Appalachian children mentioned specifically in the general education literature was in published proceedings of a national conference on "Education for the Culturally Disadvantaged." The conference dealt with "poverty sub-cultures" which, in the words of that time, included American

Indians, Negroes of the Southern States, Spanish-Americans, and "White Anglo-Saxon people, mainly located in the Appalachian and Ozark mountains" (SCREL, 1967).

During the cultural deprivation era, the victim blamers saw that middle-class children were better prepared for school than lower-class children. And so they established programs of "compensatory education" to build up the attitudes and skills of the lower-class children. And in fact, programs such as Head Start did help children in the primary years. But their edge on success wore off after a few grades because no basic changes had been made in the structure of the schooling experience. The victim blamers saw that middle-class children were better prepared for school than lower-class children, but they failed to see the reverse view: that schools were better prepared for middle-class children than for lower-class children (Ryan, 1976). Ryan wrote,

> We are dealing, it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally depriving schools. And the task to be accomplished is not to revise, and amend, and repair deficient children but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. Only by changing the nature of the educational experience can we change its product. (Ryan, 1976, p. 61)

It is encouraging that educators are now beginning attempts to change the nature of the educational experience and assure success for all children. It appears that for maximum efficiency, all restructuring efforts should take into account the cultural background of the students who will be served by that institution. As Cherry Banks (1993) pointed out:

> Changing schools fundamentally requires that we confront harsh reality. We must recognize that, for many low-income and minority students, there is little or no continuity between schooling and the rest of their lives. To be successful in school, they must cross barriers of language, values, cognition, and culture. Restructuring schools for equity challenges schools to establish greater congruence between themselves and students' homes. Children have a better chance of succeeding in school when such congruence exists. (Banks, pp 42-43)

Cultural Diversity

It seems that the first step in the process of making schools more culturally compatible is to come to understand what culture really is. A number of different definitions for culture can be found in the literature. It seems that almost every author has a different favorite definition. Harry Caudill defined culture rather poetically in A Darkness at Dawn (1976):

> Every person and society is a product of two factors, genes and culture. The workings of each is still poorly understood if, indeed, it is understood at all. A culture – the subconsciously and deeply ingrained "truths," mores, prejudices, biases, superstitions, and preferences that link a people together – can bind as surely as shackles of steel. But as those bonds are forged slowly over many generations so they outlast steel, enduring until their origins are lost in the shadowy mists of a common beginning. (Caudill, p. 1)

According to Brown, culture is defined as:

> . . . all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people. It is a body of common understandings. It is the sum total and the organization or arrangement of all the group's ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. It also includes the physical manifestations of the group as exhibited in the objects they make – the clothing, shelter, tools, weapons, implements, utensils, and so on. (Brown, pg. 3)

According to Maehr (1974) and Shade (1989b), culture represents:

> . . . a group's preferred way of perceiving, judging, and organizing the ideas, situations, and events they encounter in their daily lives. It represents the rules or guidelines a set of individuals who share a common history or geographical setting use to mediate their interaction with their environment. As such, culture might involve adherence to a specific religious orientation, use of a certain language or style of communication, as well as preferences for various expressive methods to represent their perceptions of the world, i.e., in art, music, or dance. Culture also determines the guidelines individuals within groups use to select the specific information to which they attend as well as the interpretation given to that information. For Americans of color, culture takes on the added dimension of establishing guidelines for interacting with a society which does not value either their ethnicity, their history and heritage, or their language. (Shade, 1989b, p. 9)

Thus, cultural groups can be bounded in many ways. It is common to think of different races as cultural groups. But it is possible to think also of religious groups as cultural groups. Additionally people who speak the same language, or dialect, often share a

common culture. It is also possible to think of cultures which are groups with common lifestyles based upon common experiences and understandings. Such a group could be determined by geographic considerations, such as the 18 million persons who live in Appalachia from Pennsylvania to Alabama (Baker, pp. 5-6). A culture could be the culture of a region, of a community, of a school, and even of a family.

Although there is little agreement on how to define culture, there generally is agreement on the existence of cultural diversity among citizens of the United States. "In the prevailing context of cultural pluralism there is less of a tendency to view regions and the local life of particular places as aberrant, and a greater willingness to see these as evidence of natural diversity." (Miller, 1988, p. 97)

Appalachian Culture

Historically there has been a debate between those who saw Appalachia as "an incomplete, perhaps even deformed, version of what the nation should be" (Estes et al, p. 85) and those who saw Appalachia as a distinct region with a unique culture of its own. Since most Appalachians are in many ways similar to mainstream America – white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant – Appalachians have become one of the most neglected of minority groups. Porter (1981) referred to Appalachians as a people "adrift in the mainstream." They do differ from mainstream Americans in their history and in value orientations. In fact, the value orientations and behavior patterns are often directly in opposition with those of mainstream America. One example is a mainstream emphasis on achievement and competition as opposed to the Appalachian emphasis on equality and cooperation (Porter, pp. 13-14).

A 1984 study argued that earlier studies incorrectly announced that traditional Appalachian values were dead and that mountain culture had been absorbed into mainstream modernism (Welch, 1985). In this qualitative study, Welch concluded that aspects

of the traditional highland values remained as a working force in the lives of a majority of rural mountain people. These values served as protective "buffers" against rapid change and against the detrimental aspects of mainstream culture seen as currently invading Appalachia (Welch, 1985).

Caudill (1976) listed several cultural traits he believed had developed as a result of the early history of the region:

1. Sense of place – a strong attachment to the land.
2. Clannishness – a strong attachment to a small community of close, intermarried families.
3. Childish trust in others – a factor which allows outsiders to rob and exploit them.
4. Ignorance of the nature of the land itself – a factor that allows highlanders to misuse and abuse the land without realizing how disastrous consequences may be.
5. Deeply rooted mistrust of government.
6. Disregard of education – one of the factors that has kept highlanders naive and vulnerable to the problems of the outside world (Caudill, 1976).

Some authors would probably argue with Caudill about the last trait, citing research that shows that Appalachian parents have high educational aspirations for their children. And yet it is obvious that traditionally schooling has not been an extremely high priority, and that many Appalachians have had low educational expectations for themselves and their children. Perhaps that is due to the lack of any relevance the highlanders have been able to see between their schooling and their life in the real world.

A 1985 ethnographic study conducted in Cincinnati by John Williams found that an oral tradition continued to play an important role in the lives of Appalachian migrants. In the conversations he recorded, many allusions to mountain traditions revealed an ethnic identity steeped in Appalachian folklore. Socioeconomic conflict with other ethnic groups in Cincinnati was mentioned often and seemed to be a strong force in shaping their ethnic identity, along with the "hillbilly" stereotype (Williams, 1985).

Sense of Place

Several authors have commented about a strong sense of place in Appalachia. As Ron Eller wrote, "Whether one views place as something to be preserved or as something to be overcome, few observers would deny the central role which place has played in Appalachian history and life." (R. D. Eller, 1988, p. 3)

A popular misconception of the idea of place in Appalachia is that people are attached just to a specific parcel of land. Although mountain people may tend to be tied to a specific plot of land (the "homeplace") they are tied also to people (their kin folks) and to memories (shared experiences). Such a sense of place is part of a larger paradigm or outlook on life that is communal rather than individualistic or self-centered (Eller, 1988, p. 4). Although many earlier writers have said that Appalachians had no sense of community, Eller proposed that a sense of place in Appalachia represents a form of community – a set of long-term relationships that bind people together. From the very beginning, the early settlers were able to survive by being part of an extended community of interdependent families that helped each other.

A history professor at a small Appalachian university said the following:

> The sense of place is not necessarily a positive experience. . . For more than a decade I have taken a non-binding unofficial survey of my Appalachian history students, and until recently, the number of those who cannot wait to go back to their home county and the number who cannot wait to leave their home county were in every instance, almost equal. My most recent informal poll shows would-be out-migrants to be in a majority. (Sprague, 1987, p. 25)

Right-Brain Orientation of Appalachian Culture

Bill Best (1986) commented that the key to understanding Appalachian culture was to understand the pull inside all people between right brain hemisphere and left brain hemisphere processes. Best asserted that Appalachian culture is primarily right-brain: intuitive, sensuous, and creative. The Appalachian culture "promotes intuition, inductive reasoning, sensuousness, spirituality, sensitivity and creativity in the arts, emotional

bonding (especially within families), and the languages of metaphor, simile, and poetry." (Best, p. 47)

Although people who think are not a rarity in the Appalachian culture, not much time is spent in idle speculation, but rather the product of thought is usually concretely connected with real life (Best, p. 46). Appalachian people tend to be emotional and to have a feeling for artistic form expressed in such things as singing, quilting, laying out fields for planting, and special family or community rituals. Intuition is important and reasoning is generally inductive. There is a heavy reliance on oral as well as on non-verbal communication, with children being very sensitive to body language (Best).

Appalachian Dialect

People are often judged by their dialect. The study conducted by Williams (1985) of Appalachian migrants to Cincinnati confirmed the findings of sociolinguists that certain dialects are highly stigmatized and lead to sharp social stratification. But most of the educational research done on dialects spoken by children focused on ethnic groups other than Appalachians. For example, one research study about teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward black English showed that teacher held significantly less positive attitudes toward students who spoke Black English. It was interesting that the Black teachers in the study demonstrated significantly less positive attitudes than the White teachers did (McCullough).

A woman from a northern state who had settled in an Appalachian county told about meeting one of her daughter's middle school classmates. "She was beautiful. When you looked at her, you thought she could be 'Miss America.' But as soon as she opened her mouth, you knew that she couldn't make it pass 'Miss Ridge County.'"

Recently there was an interesting multicultural incident in a Miss USA pageant on television. During one of the final rounds, the master of ceremonies was talking with Miss

Louisiana and inquired if she happened to be Cajun. (Recently it seems to have become stylish to be Cajun.) The contestant proudly asserted that she was and demonstrated by reeling off several phrases of Cajun dialect. She was rewarded by enthusiastic applause from the audience.

At this point in time, it is impossible to imagine a beauty contestant from one of the Appalachian states being asked, "Are you really a 'Hillbilly'?" and the contestant's responding by proudly belting out several phrases in mountain dialect. And perhaps we will have to arrive at such a point of cultural pride before much real progress can be made.

Cultural Stereotyping

Of course, it important to remember that culture is a dynamic, living, ever-changing thing, not something static which has been preserved in a museum. An attachment to one's region or one's traditional culture no longer signifies "provincialism" or even isolation since we live in a world where monks in India now copy ancient stone tablets on a Xerox copier and where Bedouins riding their camels listen to transistor radios – or perhaps portable CD players by now (Miller, 1988).

Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to stereotype Appalachian culture, even among those who value the culture. A good illustration of the possible effects of stereotyping is the experience of Jim Wayne Miller's character he named "The Brier." In a poem entitled, "The Brier Losing Touch With His Traditions," the Brier was discovered as "an authentic mountain craftsman" and his woodcrafts became very popular. But after he moved to the city in order to be closer to the market for his work, people lost interest in him when they learned that he used power tools to keep up with the orders, and dressed in modern clothes. And his craft business began to slack off. The poem ends,

> So he moved back down to east Kentucky.
> Had himself a brochure printed up
> with a picture of him using his hand lathe,
> bearded, barefoot, in faded overalls.

Then when folks would come from the magazines,
he'd get rid of them before suppertime
so he could put on his shoes, his flowered sport shirt
and double-knit pants, and open a can of beer
and watch the six-thirty news on tv
out of New York and Washington.

He had to have some time to be himself. (Miller, 1988, p. 90)

Multicultural Education

The earliest educational programs that dealt with cultural diversity were outcomes of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. But many of the reforms of that era failed to become institutionalized, and multicultural education programs all but disappeared from some areas. Currently there is increasing recognition of American cultural diversity and a renewed interest in multicultural education. Baker (1983) commented about the need for a multicultural approach to education:

> The public school, because of its nature, is expected to address the educational needs of all learners. Past attempts have failed to provide the type of learning that took into consideration the diverse background of the students. Schools were designed to pay particular attention to the needs of one group of students; these students represented the mainstream of life in the United States and the schools failed to make adjustments for those whose lifestyles differed from the mainstream. (Baker, p. 8)

The recognition of cultural differences helps determine if an educational program will enable or disable students. Enabling educational programs "work with students and their home communities to build on what they bring; disabling programs ignore and attempt to eradicate knowledge and strengths students bring, and replace them with those of the dominant society" (Sleeter, p. 5). Baker (1983) outlined three main goals of multicultural education:

1. To become aware of oneself, one's culture and /or cultures, and ways to function within the larger society.

2. To develop an appreciation of other cultures. Since peoples of the world are bound together within the "system," survival depends on how well we can live

together. Also understanding the ways of others increases self-knowledge and objectivity.

3. "To encourage individuals to support and to participate in as many cultural groups as they choose. Multicultural education encourages the freedom of individuals to maintain the lifestyles, values, and beliefs of any ethnic and / or cultural groups they choose to be a part of. " (Baker, pp. 4 - 6)

As Baker (1983) mentioned, one of the important functions of multicultural education is to make students aware of their own culture. Ferguson (1987) explained the importance of such awareness:

> Culture is almost impossible for one to identify or recognize on one's own. Culture has been learned from earliest infancy and most cultural learning is firmly planted even before the first day of school. Culture has become sublimated. It is not something that easily comes to the surface in an individual in a conscious manner. It is almost impossible to learn about (oneself) through pure self-examination. While culture holds the individual prisoner, it is possible for the person to learn of his culture and, through knowing, to respond to its sanctions. . . . By knowing one's culture, one becomes intellectually and spiritually freed. (Ferguson, p. 13)

Also Baker mentioned that one function of multicultural education is to encourage students to be part of more than one cultural group. According to Hunter, "In a truly multicultural classroom, the teacher recognizes, encourages, and values the bicultural development of students. Rather than forcing all students into the majority culture mold, the teacher . . . can help children live in two cultures." (Hunter)

Thus, there is currently an increase in utilizing cross-cultural approaches to education of recognized cultural groups such as African-Americans, Native Americans, even Cajuns. But one of the difficulties in proposing a multicultural approach to education in Appalachia is that often there is no recognition of Appalachians as a separate cultural or ethnic group.

Literacy in Appalachia

As the literature yielded varying definitions of culture, there were also many different definitions of literacy. Freeman (1992) defined literacy as "the ability to read and write to

some extent; numeracy is sometimes included in it. . . . Being literate means being able to present ideas using the written word, and understanding, storing and analyzing words to react appropriately."(Freeman) Sometimes there is also an element of fluency implied so that a literate person is fluent enough in reading and writing to be able to concentrate on the purpose rather than the process itself.

UNESCO (1988) defined a literate person as one " who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement about his everyday life." UNESCO defined a "functionally literate" person as one "who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community." Thus, literacy is set within a context and has a functional purpose within that context.

Some of the definitions indicated that literacy did not end at the end of a literacy course. UNESCO's definition of "functional literacy" said that it enables one "to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development." "Literacy is probably the most important foundation stone of lifelong learning. Even so, millions of people all over the world leave school never having acquired the ability to read or write. "(Freeman, p. 78)

Freeman also mentioned the need for the content of literacy lessons to be culturally appropriate for the students:

> Good literacy teaching encourages the newly qualified to continue reading, but if the ideas presented to them differ too widely from what they already know, there may be misunderstanding, loss of interest and poor learning. Worse, it may actually widen the gap between the indigenous culture, associated with illiteracy and ignorance on the one hand, and modern society, associated with literacy, knowledge and progress on the other. (Freeman, p. 219)

One historical study that examined literacy movements in Appalachia during the early 20th century showed that designers of literacy programs need to understand the perceptions of the people who are the target audience for such programs in order to achieve success. For example, promoters of early programs often spoke of illiteracy as a

stigma or a disgrace. However, this was not a motive for most of the program participants, who did not view illiteracy in this way. Instead, they saw literacy as a means to an end. Literacy would allow them to write their own correspondence, conduct their own business without fear of being cheated, vote by themselves, etc. (Estes et al., 1987).

One step in the right direction for literacy in Appalachia was seen in the efforts of teachers who were associated with the Eastern Kentucky Teachers' Network. Many of these teachers believed that educational failure was being perpetuated in Appalachia "through the material forms and structures of the school, which tend to maintain relationships of power and domination." (R. G. Eller, 1989) Thus, many of the Network teachers were attempting to "realize an alternate rationality in their classrooms by implementing a more critical literacy, i. e., a literacy that legitimates their students' culture and language, and that encourages students to confront inequitable relationships in society." (Eller, 1989) Teachers of the four classrooms observed by Eller in her study recognized "the inadequacies of current instructional practices for the students they teach, and all are attempting to counteract failure in their classrooms by redefining literacy for their students."

One naturalistic study investigated and described home-school communication patterns between special reading teachers and parents of first-grade Appalachian children enrolled in the Reading Recovery Program. This is an early intervention program which takes first-graders "at risk" of failure in literacy and moves them to a level of success with a 4 to 6 month period. Teachers in the program were found to have two different styles of communication with parents. Those with a passive style used formal printed announcements to invite the parents to come to the school "sometime" and didn't really expect the parents to participate. The teachers who had active styles of communication were able to involve parents in the children's literacy efforts. They phoned the parents, sent notes that were handwritten, and met the parents face-to-face whenever possible. They communicated that they really needed and wanted the parents' help with the program. The active

teachers personally invited most of the parents one at a time to observe a Reading Recovery lesson. These observation sessions were the first positive school visit many parents had ever had (Holland, 1987).

Cross-Cultural / Bilingual Approaches in Appalachia

One educator pointed out that many children are raised in a cultural environment that is very different from what predominates at school. When that occurs, the children use up so much energy adjusting to the school's expectations of appropriate behavior that there is very little energy left over to devote to learning (Gay, 1975). Researchers studying Appalachian children in northern schools observed that they had problems with non-achievement and that they were discriminated against by automatically being placed in the lowest categories in ability groupings and tracking. Also the teachers had very low expectations of their abilities or achievements (Porter).

> The problems of their children in urban schools for three decades have contributed to the visibility of Appalachians in the north. First, since these Appalachian learners of are not of the middle class, they do not bring with them the experiences, standard English verbal abilities, concepts, or values which are middle class, and they do not share many cultural understandings with the teacher. (Porter, pp. 14-15)

Best (1986) commented on the need for classrooms in public schools that are responsive to the cultural traits of Appalachian children:

> The combination of shame, emotional sensitivity, and artistic forms of expression makes Appalachian children poor candidates for success in the public schools where almost all such attributes are not valued and where very few of their strengths are perceived as such. It is no wonder that the very bright, the very sensitive, and the very artistic drop out at the earliest opportunity if they can't find ways to circumvent the school, go in their own directions, and gain their own educations despite the system. (Best, pg. 54)

All three of the goals of multicultural education outlined by Baker seem appropriate in multicultural efforts for Appalachians:

1. Appalachians need to become familiar with their own culture and learn to value their roots. This is need both to increase their self-esteem and to make it o.k. to remain in Appalachia is that is what they choose to do.

2. Appalachians need to learn to appreciate other cultures and people who are different from them. This is particularly important in areas where there are virtually no residents from other ethnic groups. Lack of exposure to diversity often allows extreme racial prejudice to continue. Learning tolerance is important especially if Appalachians decide to live in other areas where they will be dealing with a global world.

3. Many Appalachians experience "marginality" – living in two social worlds. With few jobs available in the rural areas of Appalachia, they often live in one culture and work in another. Thus, multicultural education is needed to educate them for both social worlds and then allow them to choose – either or both.

In 1905 Emma Bell Miles wrote in Spirit of the Mountains: "For although throughout the highlands of Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas our nature is one, our hopes, our loves, our daily lives the same, we are yet a people asleep, a race without knowledge of its own existence." And in many ways that is still true today. Since area schools have not helped mountain children to understand themselves, those who took "education seriously began the process of severing the organic connection between themselves and their culture" (Best, pg. 49).

Eller proposed that we need more research on Appalachia from the perspectives of those within the region, not just from the perspectives of those who have come from outside, including the federal government and the private sector. "Renewal must begin from within, with the revitalization of communities and of the spirit of self-help and civic virtue." (R. D. Eller, 1988, p. 12) According to Best (1986),

> The best hope for developing an educational system which will allow Appalachian people to grow in ways appropriate for us is to build upon educational philosophies . . . which are congruent with thought and action modes already existing in the mountains. (Best, pg. 52)

One of the suggestions that Best made was to have the arts be given more priority at all levels of schooling. Both Miller (1977) and Best (1986) recommended a bilingual approach to literacy:

> Reading and language arts should begin where the children are in the literal sense. It is not enough to have Dick and Jane passing through the mountains on their way to Florida From New England. Early readers should contain stories about life as it is lived in the particular areas where the children live. Children should learn and be allowed to appreciate the meanings of words and language patterns they hear at home and not just those they hear at school. (Best, pp. 55-56)

According to Holland (1987), "The language and literacy of home accompanies the child to school. Vice versa, the language and literacy of the school enters the family literacy context through the child." (Holland, p. 95) Christine Bennett commented that when comparing mainstream Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans,

> the existence of different languages makes the coexistence of distinct cultures within our boundaries apparent. The many similarities between Anglo and black culture, though, often prevent the recognition and acceptance of some distinct cultural characteristics. For instance, black English is often perceived as "slang" or poor quality standard English. (Bennett, 1989, pg. 79)

> The almost exclusive use of standard English in our nation's schools is a blatant example of mainstream orientation. We are not debating whether or not we accept the position that all school children should develop enough skill in standard English to make its use a functional option. We are examining the cultural conflict many children experience in schools that ignore or repress the language they have lived with since birth. (Bennett, 1989, pp. 82-83)

Bennett goes on to say that educators often realize how much frustration is experienced by first-graders whose native tongue is a language other than English, such as Spanish, Japanese, etc. However, it is less often recognized that the same problems with standard English may exist for children whose native tongue is a non-standard dialect of English such as black English or Appalachian English (Bennett, p. 83).

> Attempting to teach children from language or ethnic minorities to use reading in middle-class ways promoted egalitarianism and homogeneity. Simultaneously, it often denied the children's home context and estranged them form the origins. However, to accept and extend the literacy patterns of the home honored and promoted cultural diversity. Success in this vein may decrease the compliance of some children with mainstream ways, but it may also reinforce their identities and preserve pluralism. (Holland, pp. 96-97)

Some recent educational efforts have been aimed at helping children utilize both their native dialect of English as well as standard English. According to Hunter:

> The teacher who understands children who speak nonstandard English can encourage culturally different youth in creative writing, creative drama, and other learning

activities. If students are allowed and encouraged to utilize their native language, their creative efforts, whether in writing or drama, can be enhanced greatly. (Hunter)

Bill Best told about his third grade son's announcement that he had discovered two "kinds of talk" which he called "school talk and country talk."

> He described "school talk" as a particular kind of talk used only at school. It was to be used when teachers and students talked with each other, but it was not good anywhere else – as least as far as he knew at that time. In contrast, "country talk" was what one used at home and in the rural community where we live. He said that "country talk" was the better kind of talk because it allowed one to "tell about feelings." He also said that "country talk" was better because "you can say what you mean using country talk." I told him that "school talk" did have some uses and that he should learn to use "school talk" so that he could use it when necessary. I also told him to hold on to his "country talk" because he might continue to have feelings which he might wish to share. (Best, pg. 56)

A study conducted by Pollock in 1988 found that teachers should learn to accept a young reader's use of Appalachian dialect during oral reading when the meaning of the passage was not adversely affected. It was also found that understanding dialect features used by students was important and that pre-service teachers should be provided with sources of information on Appalachian English (Pollock).

A study by Cantrell (1991) showed that for young Appalachian dialect speakers, their dialect had a significant influence on spelling when children were first learning to read and spell. A teacher in an Appalachian elementary school told me that I should see her fifth grade students trying to figure out how to spell "you'ins." She also mentioned that some of the native teachers in the school where she taught spoke Appalachian dialect themselves in the classroom, making it even more unlikely that their students would learn Standard English. Thus, there appears to be a need for more training in Speech for pre-service native teachers, as well as training in English as a Second Language for teachers from other regions or cultural groups.

Since schools in Appalachia traditionally have not been very effective, many areas still have very high illiteracy and dropout rates. Often Appalachian cultural values are still strong and in opposition with those espoused in a classroom designed for mainstream

students. It appears that changes are needed in both the curriculum and the instructional delivery in the classrooms, so that students can be educated both to live in their home region and to function in a global world. Also reform is needed in Teacher Education, so that teachers to be knowledgeable about this region and will be able teach the language arts bilingually, respecting both Standard English and the students' home dialect.

Our nation needs for all citizens to function at the peak of their abilities. Culturally compatible literacy and school programs can do much to achieve the goal of having all 18 million Appalachians learn to live up to their full potential.

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